

Joint Memorandum for consideration of

1. His Grace Rt. Rev. Thomas Macwan, Archbishop of Gandhinagar and Administrator of Ahmedabad Diocese
2. His Excellency Rt. Rev. Athanasius Rethna Swamy S, Bishop Designate, Ahmedabad Diocese
3. His Excellency Rt. Rev. Raphael Thattil, Bishop of Shamshabad Eparchy

It has come to our notice from various sources that a new diocese for Syro Malabar Catholics has been erected at Shamshabad which will have jurisdiction over people of Syro Malabar Catholic origin settled in various parts of India including Ahmedabad. Though there has been no official communication conveyed to the laity by way of church circulars or pastoral letters, we fear this will lead to division of laity in accordance with the rites they are born in.

We, the following persons having Syro Malabar Catholic origin, now residing at Ahmedabad, wish to submit the following points for your joint consideration.

1. There are total about 850 families of Syro Malabar Catholic origin now settled in Ahmedabad. Their migration from various Syro Malabar dioceses in Kerala had begun in the second half of the 20th century and the first generation migrants are now rather aged, all of them mostly above the age of 50 years. Majority of the Syro Malabar Catholics in Ahmedabad now comprises of the second and third generation who have very limited exposure towards the Syro Malabar rites as they have been brought up in the local Latin Church with which they share a sense of belongingness and oneness.
2. All these years the migrant Syro Malabar Catholics in Ahmedabad have been duly cared for by the local Latin Church and we all are grateful for their pastoral care without any sort of discrimination or alienation. All of us, i.e. the elders as well as the youngsters have been actively participating in all the religious activities as one motivated group. We gratefully acknowledge the encouragements and opportunities extended to us by the local church and its hierarchy who also value our efforts, contributions and participation in the local church activities. In fact, over the period of last 75-80 years, we have become an integral part of the local Latin Church here. All of us, barring very few people, have had no occasion for any grievances, as the local church was ever generous to provide us with chaplains of Syro Malabar origin for conducting Holy Mass in Syro Malabar rites as well as taking care of other pastoral needs on regular basis. Most of us remember the fond nurturing the local church authorities gave us in our early days of struggled survival. Their spiritual and emotional support has given us the strength to survive the hard days without losing our faith as well as the strength to bring up our second generation in the faithful ways taught by our Saviour Jesus Christ.

3. Now, with the erection of the new Syro Malabar diocese at Shamshabad, there appears to be a jolt in the harmonious co-existence of the laity of Syro Malabar origin. It may be considered a welcome move for proclaiming the Lord's message in new territories and among new people. However the new set up if used solely for herding up all persons of Syro Malabar origin under one imaginary umbrella, would be a self defeating effort for expansion activities.
4. In spite of very clear papal instructions that the existing laity of Syro Malabar origin, though henceforth members of the new Shamshabad diocese, may, at their choice, continue as duly registered parishioners of local Latin church as hitherto and at liberty avail all sacramental/rites obligations as parishioners of Latin Church, it is unfortunate that some sort of miscommunications have started from certain vested corners that the laity of Syro Malabar origin will cease to be parishioners of local churches under Latin Rite. Such misinformation and wrong propaganda are hurting the genuine sentiments of the faithful and need to be stopped forthwith.
5. At this juncture we wish to draw your kind attention to the reported circular of Pope regarding the very formation of Shamshabad diocese and the subsequent clarifications notified by the Prefect for Eastern Churches which very clearly specify the right of the faithful of Syro Malabar origins to remain as members of local Latin Parishes and at the same time continue to be Syro Malabar Catholics as a right derived by birth. Any sacramental facilities cannot and should not be denied or deprived by either of the rites and the choice is of the lay person alone and not of any hierarchical authority.
6. It is most unfortunate that some vested interests have already begun collecting huge amounts from laity in the pretext of building new churches under Syro Malabar rite in Ahmedabad. The Bishop of Shamshabad is said to have even entered into rental agreements with some non-Catholic churches in Ahmedabad to use their premises for conducting Syro Malabar Masses. Such a step is totally unwarranted and we strongly protest against it as it has cost immense anguish in the Catholic community as a whole. There is no cogent reason of any sort to avail such facilities of non-Catholic denominations as we have more than enough space and facilities of the local catholic churches ever available to us for all our needs, be it for Masses, Novenas, Feasts, etc. It will be the privilege of the local church to identify areas where new churches or prayer halls need to be built as per requirement of spreading population of faithful of all rites. Believers from all rites have been actively participating and contributing in such formation and expansion activities and we will continue to contribute our might in future also. It is advisable that scarce resources should not be spent to erect multiple centers of worship in same localities. We wish the bishops should use their good offices to stop such activities especially the forceful financial contributions in the name of building new churches.

7. It is learnt that of late a small group of people are compelling unassuming laity to contribute huge amounts to build new Syro Malabar churches in Ahmedabad by adopting blackmailing/brainwashing tactics, threatening stoppage of pastoral care, sacramental rites in respect of Baptism, Communion, Marriage etc. We request for urgent intervention of the Bishops and seek their indulgence by way of issuance of suitable circulars to be read out at all parishes in all languages i.e. English, Gujarati and Malayalam.
8. We wish to solemnly proclaim our faith in the Lord's Church and its teachings. At the same time, we wish to affirm that the matters relating to minor ritualistic differences may not at all be considered of any title importance. Rather they may be treated as minor attributes owing to mainly geographic and linguistic differences. In this developed era of Universal approachability when the whole world has become a global village, wherein dual citizenship is even very common, no undue importance of rites be given in the matters of faith. Our life should tell how good Christians we are rather than which rite we belong to. Christ should be our sole leader and no divisive forces should override His importance in our life and faith.
9. The above mentioned facts do indicate our rightful choice vested in accordance with Papal direction in the matter. We therefore hereby request the Bishops that
 - a. The Laity of Syro Malabar origin may keep the liberty to choose to remain with the existing Latin Parishes and continue as a right to receive pastoral/sacramental care from the respective Latin parishes with subsisting rights as Syro Malabar Catholics at their respective native places.
 - b. Sacramental records of Baptism/Matrimony etc. may be shared with the Diocesan authorities of the different rites and as an inter-institutional exchange of information without putting the laity to any hardships in this regard.
 - c. The Syro Malabar Catholics attached to the local Latin parishes should continue to enjoy all the present facilities like educational admissions, catechism, vocational and matrimonial counseling, religious retreats etc.
 - d. Services of priest for conducting masses in Malayalam in Syro Malabar rite continue to be made available as hitherto in the local parishes of Ahmedabad and nearby areas where the laity of Syro Malabar origins are residing in good numbers.
 - e. Immediate steps to be taken to stop forthwith any adverse propaganda to mislead unassuming parishioners about division of churches as per rites.
 - f. Immediate issuance of suitable circulars to all parishes that status quo will prevail and there will be no en-masse expulsion of parishioners from the existing parishes just by virtue of their birth in any particular rite.
 - g. Immediate issuance of circular cautioning about the activities of certain vested elements in collecting large amounts of money on compulsion with threats of blockage of sacramental rites, social boycott etc.

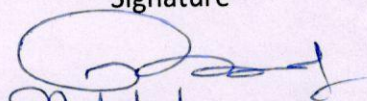

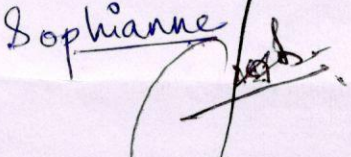
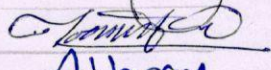
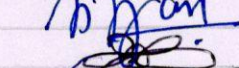

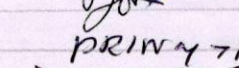
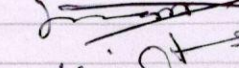
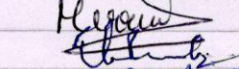
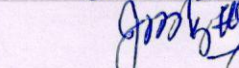
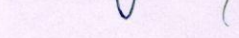


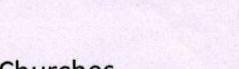
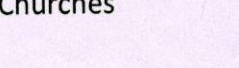
We also take this opportunity to state that we do not in any way criticize the Pope's decision of erecting a new diocese so that the Syro Malabar Catholic Church can take up independent Evangelical activities in various parts of India.

This memorandum is submitted by following parishioners who are authorized by the majority of Syro Malabar Catholics as the Steering Committee members of the organization 'Syro Malabar Catholics for Unity (Gujarat)', which comprises of majority of families of Syro Malabar origin now settled in Ahmedabad.

A copy of this Memorandum has been forwarded to Rev. Fr. Francis Parmar S.J., Provincial of Society of Jesus for his kind consideration of our genuine spiritual needs.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

For Syro Malabar Catholics for Unity (Gujarat)

Name	Parish	Signature
1. ROMY SEBASTIAN	LOYOLA	
2. PHILIP JOB	St. Jude	
3. SOPHIANNE JOB	ST. JUDE	
4. C. S. JOSEPH	St. Jude	
5. M. K. CYRIAC	St. Jude	
6. SILJAN DEVASSY	NARODA	
7. JOE PALATHUNKAL	Narada	
8. GIGI PHILIP	Thalleg	
9. T. K. JOSE	College Church	
10. PRINCY THOMAS	College (Pury)	
11. THOMAS EMMANUEL	Loyola	
12. JOSE MATHEW	Loyola	
13. MERRIN. K. NEELARY	LOYOLA	
14. T. P. JOHN	St. Jude	
15. JOSEPH VIK	St. Jude	

Members of Steering Committee

Dt. 28th February 2018

At Ahmedabad

Attachments: (1) Circular of the Holy Father Pope Francis

(2) Instruction of the Prefect of Congregation of Oriental Churches